



NEWS RELEASE

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State issues safety alert for consumers receiving pedicures

Following reported cases of infections linked to nail salon whirlpool footbaths, officials are reaching out to consumers and salon owners.

SACRAMENTO -- Following reported cases of bacterial infections linked to Northern California-area nail salons, the state is issuing a safety alert for consumers receiving pedicures.

"Consumer safety guidelines are especially important during the holiday season, when consumers use salons more often to get ready for holiday gatherings, and salon gift certificates are being bought for gifts," said Terri Ciau, Executive Officer, California State Board of Barbering and Cosmetology.

State and local authorities working together

Local and state officials have been working together to investigate the outbreak of infections that cause lesions on the legs of customers who received pedicure services at various salons in the San Jose area. Although only three salons have been cited, customers of additional salons have also reported lesions.

The lesions are linked to contaminated whirlpool footbaths, used as part of pedicure procedures. When the footbaths are not properly cleaned and disinfected, hair and skin debris build up in the tub basin, allowing bacteria to grow to unusually high levels.

Officials with the State Board of Barbering and Cosmetology and the Department of Health Services, along with local officials in the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, are investigating the reported cases. The cases came to light after consumers complained to the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology about lesions appearing following pedicure procedures.

"The cooperation between the county and state, as well as our local physician community, has been outstanding," said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, Health Officer, Santa Clara County. "We will continue to work in partnership to monitor and address the situation in order to protect the public's health."

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Education Campaign for Consumers and Salons

In response to these recent bacteria infections, the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, along with the state and county health departments, is conducting an education campaign for both consumers and salon owners.

“With helpful guidelines, we want to educate the consumers of California on how they can help protect themselves from whirlpool bath infection,” Ciau said. “In addition, we are reaching out to our salon licensees to emphasize the importance of cleaning and disinfecting that follow state health and safety regulations.”

The Board is mailing out 37,000 letters to its salon licensees throughout the state outlining the proper cleaning procedure for the whirlpool footbaths. The cleaning and disinfection procedures are part of regulations enacted three years ago in response to a bacterial outbreak linked to whirlpool footbaths in a Santa Cruz County nail salon. The letters to licensees will be printed in three languages – English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

The footspa regulations include cleaning and disinfecting between each pedicure customer, and a more thorough cleaning at the end of the business day that includes a 10-minute system circulation. Every other week, the footspa system must be cleaned with a bleach solution, when the basin must be soaked in the solution for at least six hours.

Guidelines for consumers

To help protect themselves, consumers can use the following guidelines before they get a pedicure treatment that includes a whirlpool footbath:

- ❖ Don't shave your legs before the appointment. Shaving makes you more susceptible to nicks and cuts, which are gateways for bacteria.
- ❖ If you have broken skin or lesions on your lower legs, do not get a pedicure.
- ❖ Check out the salon. Make sure its Board of Barbering & Cosmetology license is posted in plain view in the reception area and is current;

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- ❖ Make sure the operator's license is posted at his or her work station;
- ❖ Make sure the Board's Health and Safety poster is displayed in the reception area;
- ❖ See whether the salon is clean, free of trash, and set up with clean instruments;
- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask the operator how the footspas are cleaned and disinfected. If they hesitate or won't answer you, that could be a sign you may want to take your business elsewhere.
- ❖ If you have any doubts about the cleanliness standards at a salon, leave.
- ❖ If the footspa's basin looks dirty, consider having a pedicure without the use of a whirlpool spa.

The first step consumers should do - if they suspect that they are infected through a pedicure procedure - is to visit their doctor, according to the State Department of Health Services.

"If you have one or more persistent skin boils after having a pedicure with a whirlpool footbath, you should contact your doctor for an evaluation. Let your doctor know that you have had a whirlpool footbath before your skin infection started," said State Public Health Officer Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson.

Also, it's important to call the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (1-800-952-5210) and report any problems you believe are the result of your salon, according to Ciau. You can also file a complaint via the Board's Web site: www.barbercosmo.ca.gov.

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